Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-16 (Canceled)

17. (New) A device for detecting a momentary distance between a motor vehicle and an obstacle, the device comprising:

distance sensors; and

a control unit,

wherein the control unit is arranged to calculate a driving path to be traveled through in future by the motor vehicle, using static and dynamic vehicle data, and the control unit is arranged to differentiate between relevant obstacles which are located within the driving path and irrelevant obstacles which are located outside the driving path, and

wherein the distance sensors each have a variable detection area, the control unit is arranged to adapt the range of the detection areas of the distance sensors to lateral boundaries of the driving path, and the distance sensors whose detection area is located completely in the driving path are actuated by the control unit in such a way that they operate with maximum range (R_{max}).

18. (New) The device as claimed in claim 17, wherein the control unit is arranged to gate out irrelevant obstacles which are detected.

19. (New) The device as claimed in claim 17, wherein the control unit is connected to a brake device of the motor vehicle and is arranged to automatically brake the motor vehicle.

20. (New) The device as claimed in claim 17, wherein the distance sensors are ultrasonic, radar or optical sensors.

21. (New) The device as claimed in claim 17, wherein the distance sensors are arranged on the front of a vehicle and/or on the rear of a vehicle.

22. (New) The device as claimed in claim 17, wherein the dynamic vehicle data includes vehicle velocity, direction of travel, vehicle acceleration, steering angle, change in steering angle, or sensor function.

23. (New) The device as claimed in claim 18, wherein at least one vehicle contour is used as static vehicle data.

24. (New) A method for detecting a momentary distance between a motor vehicle and an obstacle, the vehicle having distance sensors and having a control unit, the method comprising the acts of:

calculating by the control unit a driving path to be traveled through by the motor vehicle using static and dynamic vehicle data;

differentiating relevant obstacles within the driving path from irrelevant obstacles which are located outside the driving path; and

controlling, by the control unit, the range of the detection areas of the individual distance sensors in such a way that distance sensors whose distance areas are located completely on the driving path operate with maximum range while other distance sensors are actuated outside their maximum range so that their detection area is located essentially within the driving path.

25. (New) The method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the distance sensors each have a variable detection area, and the control unit adapts the range of the detection areas of the distance sensors to lateral boundaries of the driving path.

26. (New) The method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the control unit gates out irrelevant obstacles which have been detected.

27. (New) The method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the control unit is connected to a brake device of the motor vehicle, and the motor vehicle is braked automatically in response to a control signal of the control unit.

28. (New) The method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the distance sensors operate with a measuring principle which is based on electromagnetic waves or sound waves.

29. (New) The method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the driving path is calculated using vehicle velocity, direction of travel, vehicle acceleration, steering angle, change in steering angle, sensor function, or vehicle contour.